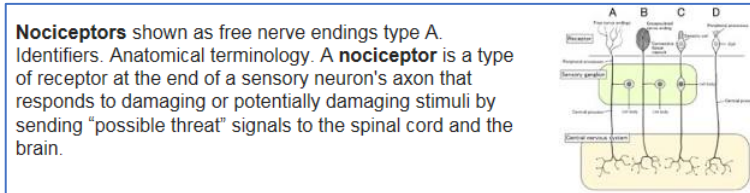Strategies to respond to research reading challenges

Reading challenges	Strategies
Feeling overwhelmed *'I have so much reading to do. How can I manage it? (or 'I feel as if I am drowning in the amount of reading I am doing').*	• Set aside specific reading time • Aim to read between 2–4 articles a day • Start by skimming the article or read just one part in detail (e.g. results or methods) • Remove the complexity by trying to stay focused, set questions to find answers to. • Track the articles – use Bibliographic Management software (e.g. EndNote, Mendeley, Zotero) ([see Library guide](#)) • Make notes to 'mentalise' the new learning (see Vlog 18) • Use Excel to list sources and key aspects of the reference according to your priorities – e.g. Author | Date | Type of Source | Title | Contribution | Questions raised | Method | Relevant? | Future | …
Takes too much time *I take about 4–6 hours to read a paper and worry about being too slow.*	Sometimes this will be the case, especially if the paper is central to your research, has new concepts and is complex • Skim read – title, abstract, introduction, conclusion, diagrams, headings, topic sentences, … then decide how much time you will take to read it • Set your purpose for reading, and focus your reading accordingly • Be selective – consider why this reading is important, assess the quality of the reading by checking the references used • Scan – read the sections in detail that are needed for your purposes
I am not sure if what I am reading is the best quality. How do I know the journal is a good quality journal?	• Locate the journal metrics (*CiteScore* & *Impact factor*, i.e. how the journal is ranked in your field • Check the references and identify Journal metrics of cites sources too • Discuss with your supervisors, HDR peers and post-docs
My supervisors asked me to read 200 papers in the next two weeks.	This task will enable you to develop an overview of your field • Read the *Abstract* and then skim, scan and only read parts of the papers in detail • Develop a system to organise & connect with each paper – e.g. Excel/EndNote, note the main points • Group the papers according to up to 6 main categories

Too hard, cannot understand *The reading is too hard and I cannot understand it.*	• ACCEPT this is NORMAL for all research – you are learning new abstract concepts and creating new ones! • Learn the new terminology (like learning a new language) by searching online for the meanings and creating your own dictionary with definitions

Nociceptors shown as free nerve endings type A. Identifiers. Anatomical terminology. A **nociceptor** is a type of receptor at the end of a sensory neuron's axon that responds to damaging or potentially damaging stimuli by sending "possible threat" signals to the spinal cord and the brain.

	• Develop an overview of the field by reading review articles to develop an overview of the field, key authors, trends, questions, debates … • TALK TALK TALK– have chats with your supervisors, peers, over coffee breaks, if desperate, explain it to your pet! • Join in informal discussion wherever they seem to happen – do NOT keep quiet! • Attend seminars and HEAR how others talk about concepts • Discuss your challenges with your supervisory panel members
Can't remember what I have read	• The secret is to make notes to yourself and write about the new ideas • TALK TALK TALK – have chats with your peers, over walks, lunch! • Mind map and make visual overviews – for examples go to: http://www.visual-literacy.org/periodic_table/periodic_table.html • Add research notes into EndNote/Mendeley/Zotero • Use Trello/EverNote/Scrivener/OneNote software to make comprehensive notes
Can't connect readings *I have read about 40 papers related to my topic, but don't know how to organise them to write about them.*	• As you read write down useful phrases, expressions, examples • Write an annotated bibliography – i.e. for each paper writing a short summary and commentary • Categorise, colourise, make visuals • Prepare some *PowerPoint* slides to explain the ideas—for 1st year undergraduate students
My supervisors have asked me to become more critical in my reading, but I don't know what this means nor how to do it.	• Ask questions e.g. How rigorous was this study? How is it relevant to my topic? How does it compare to others? • Discern how other writers' critique other studies – e.g. identify strengths & weaknesses, create a need for further research, etc. • Use critical reading tools like the Reading log or Critical